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Report of the sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee (3-5 March 2015)

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Ambassador Pedro Comissário (Mozambique), opened the meeting and welcomed Angola, Jamaica and Uruguay as new observers. The Vice Chairperson, Ambassador Carsten Staur (Denmark), chaired the meeting on the second day.

2. The Chairperson first touched upon several matters related to the membership and working of the Executive Committee. In December 2014, the General Assembly approved an expansion of the Committee's membership from 94 to 98 States, and it was expected that the Economic and Social Council would soon approve the applications of Armenia, Chad, Georgia and Uruguay. In relation to the Executive Committee Bureau, the Chairperson advised that the second Vice Chairperson, Ambassador Elissa Golberg, recently had been reassigned to a new position. Upon the arrival of her successor in the near future, the Committee would hold an election for the position of second Vice Chairperson.

3. The Chairperson formally welcomed the Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and for Protection, who recently had been appointed by the Secretary-General. Anticipating a close collaboration between the Committee and the new Assistant High Commissioners, the Chairperson noted that their appointments came at a time of significant financial and operational challenges for UNHCR.

4. With the Office working to provide protection, assistance and solutions to an unprecedented number of people of concern – 46 million world-wide – and despite continued generosity by an expanding base of donors, the Office's budgetary shortfall was concerning. Acknowledging the letter of 17 February 2015 from the High Commissioner to Member States on the adverse effect of currency fluctuations on the value of voluntary contributions, the Chairperson requested that the Deputy High Commissioner update the Committee on efforts to mitigate the potential impact upon UNHCR's beneficiaries. The Deputy High Commissioner recalled that the Executive Committee had approved a revised budget of more than US$ 6.2 billion for 2015. Even if donors were to maintain the same level of contributions made in 2014 (approximately US$ 3.3 billion), the impact of currency changes would result in a loss of effective purchasing power of nearly US$ 200 million. In response, the Office had initiated a range of cost-saving measures to minimize impact upon delivery in the field. These included across-the-board reductions for both headquarters and country operations in administrative expenditures and travel allocations, as well as the draw-down of stockpiles and the postponement of vehicle purchases or replacements. UNHCR would ensure that cost-cutting would be predictable, careful and calibrated, and would keep the Committee informed throughout the year.

II. Adoption of the agenda of the sixty-second meeting and of the 2015 work programme

5. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/66/SC/CRP.1) and the 2015 work programme (EC/66/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

III. Regional activities and global programmes

A. Strategic presentations

6. Introducing the discussion on regional activities and global programmes, the Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) drew attention to both the spiral of continuing, escalating and new emergencies and the critical resource situation that UNHCR faced, with gaps in some circumstances of up to 50 per cent of needs. He expressed deep appreciation to asylum countries, which had maintained open borders and provided safety to those fleeing conflict and persecution, as well as for the efforts of humanitarian workers, including UNHCR staff.

(a) Africa

7. The Officer-in-Charge of the Regional Bureau for Africa noted that UNHCR's operations in the region continued to be dominated by new and ongoing crises, including in Central Africa Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan, as well as protracted situations. The situation in Nigeria, in particular, was of growing concern to UNHCR, and had major regional implications. She welcomed a number of regional initiatives to address displacement and statelessness, and reported that the protection framework in the region remained strong. She also commended the exceptional generosity of the African governments and people, and emphasized the importance of partnerships, including with development actors.

8. Delegations expressed serious concern about the scale and volatility of the crises in Africa, particularly in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and South Sudan. They recognized the burden that refugee populations place on host communities and ecosystems, and commended States for upholding their international commitments. There was concern that the humanitarian response in north-eastern Nigeria had been relatively slow, and UNHCR was urged to scale-up its response. The use of biometrics to facilitate registration and verification was welcomed, as was the memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and Sudan for the registration of refugees from South Sudan.

9. Despite the challenges posed by emergency situations and financial restrictions, UNHCR was urged to continue its efforts to find solutions to protracted situations, including through the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees and the Addis Ababa Commitment. The Office was encouraged to continue to strengthen the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in the country of origin. Some delegations noted that voluntary repatriation was the preferred solution, but that it should be based on a thorough protection analysis. The pilot project to support the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya, launched in December 2014, was welcomed by some delegations, while others noted that the political environment in Somalia was not yet favourable for generalized returns. Concern was expressed over encampment policies in certain host countries, while States offering local integration opportunities were commended, particularly the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. The Committee noted that resettlement was an important tool for protection and burden-sharing, welcoming the 50 per cent increase since 2012 in the identification and referral of refugees for resettlement from Africa. Several delegations raised concerns about the lack of humanitarian access to internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly those outside camps, including in South Sudan, Central African Republic and Nigeria. Support was expressed for the profiling exercise carried out by UNHCR for IDPs in Mogadishu, Somalia, and UNHCR was encouraged to take the lead with respect to providing assistance to IDPs and returnees in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

10. UNHCR's multisectoral and community-based approach to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) was appreciated. With respect to irregular mixed movements, delegations welcomed the Khartoum Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in October 2014. The increasing number of States adhering to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) was a positive development. Support was also expressed for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Declaration on the prevention, reduction and elimination of statelessness in West Africa, adopted in February 2015.

11. Serious concern was expressed over the gaps in funding. Balance would be required to ensure that operations in Africa received sufficient resources, in spite of high profile crises in other regions, and that protracted situations received due attention among ongoing emergencies. UNHCR was encouraged to consider creative funding arrangements, including public-private partnerships. Delegations commended the work of UNHCR staff in the region, as well as the Office's efforts to lead effective regional responses through the refugee coordination model.

12. In response, the Officer-in-Charge agreed that emergency response must not come at the expense of efforts to achieve solutions. She expressed appreciation for the continued generosity of host States and reassured them of UNHCR's ongoing support. She stressed that UNHCR was committed to strengthening reception capacity inside Somalia, while in response to the Nigeria situation, the Office was scaling up human and financial resources in neighbouring countries. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) noted the interest of some delegations in further consultations on the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees.

(b) Americas

13. The Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas briefed the Committee on achievements made to strengthen humanitarian responses in the region, particularly in the context of the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. She highlighted five areas: (1) consolidating comprehensive solutions and supporting the peace process in Colombia; (2) addressing displacement in Central America; (3) promoting the consolidation of common asylum space; (4) strengthening protection and solutions response capacities in the Caribbean; and (5) ending statelessness.

14. Regarding the Brazil Plan of Action, delegations stressed the importance of translating the commitments made into tangible actions at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, on the basis of shared but differentiated responsibility. Concern was expressed over the situation of people displaced, both internally and across borders, by transnational and organized crime, including unaccompanied and separated children. There was a need to strengthen national asylum systems by harmonizing asylum standards and practices through the quality assurance initiative. Low recognition rates and barriers to refugee status determination (RSD) procedures were also raised as concerns.

15. Many States pointed to the promotion of voluntary repatriation, local integration (including through naturalization) and resettlement to achieve comprehensive solutions for refugees in the region. They welcomed protection-sensitive migration schemes to facilitate human mobility. Delegations expressed support for UNHCR's efforts to help find solutions to the plight of IDPs in Colombia through the Transitional Solutions Initiative and to consolidate peace as part of the ongoing process. With respect to mixed movements by land or sea, emphasis was placed on the need for multilateral and bilateral agreements to enhance cooperation among Latin American and Caribbean States to protect individuals travelling across the region. There were numerous expressions of support for resolving the

problem of statelessness in the Americas, with a number of States noting their plans to accede to the statelessness conventions, enact legislation on nationality and adopt statelessness status determination procedures.

16. The Director applauded efforts undertaken by States in the context of Cartagena +30 to respond to humanitarian challenges in the region. With respect to Colombia, she announced that a Protection Cluster Coordinator would soon be appointed to assist with UNHCR's response in support of the peace process. She added that UNHCR will work to ensure that visa schemes allowing refugees and asylum seekers to stay in some States would take into consideration individual protection needs; suggested that labour mobility schemes for recognized refugees have built-in protection safeguards and that such schemes could be rolled out in other sub-regions; reiterated the importance of the Quality Assurance Initiative to strengthen asylum systems; and emphasized the need to strengthen child protection, especially for unaccompanied and separated minors displaced by organized crime violence in Central America.

(c) Asia and the Pacific

17. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific provided an update on developments in the region, focusing mainly on the Afghan refugee situation and Myanmar. On Afghanistan, she spoke about the positive political developments which had opened up opportunities for return and stressed the need for increased engagement from the international community, particularly development actors, to help the country on the path to peace and stability. It was absolutely essential to ensure that repatriation took place on a voluntary basis and in sustainable manner and that asylum space be maintained. In this context, she highlighted the pressures the main host countries face and their need for continued support. The Director also addressed the issue of irregular migratory movements, highlighting the need for countries in the region to provide protection to refugees and look for solutions in their own territories, either by providing legal status, temporary protection or other forms of protection (such as through labour migration schemes), rather than relying on resettlement.

18. Delegations stressed that it was important not to divert attention away from the Afghanistan situation, which was the largest protracted refugee situation in the world, despite UNHCR's being confronted with four level-3 humanitarian crises elsewhere. Tribute was paid to the decades-long generosity of the host countries, and the need for equitable burden-sharing and support to host communities was emphasized. The Committee highlighted the imperative of preserving asylum space and preventing any lapse of protection for refugees. Afghanistan was at a critical moment, with opportunities to pursue durable solutions. UNHCR was urged to step up efforts towards voluntary repatriation and strengthen its response to the acute internal displacement crisis. In terms of obstacles to return and sustainable reintegration, the slow pace of development, shortage of employment opportunities and insecurity were cited. The Office was encouraged to continue promoting the integration of returnees in national development plans and to collaborate with development actors on addressing chronic gaps. The importance of the Afghan Government being in the lead for refugee reintegration was stressed. Delegations welcomed the focus on the Afghan situation for the high-level segment of this year's Executive Committee plenary session.

19. Concern was expressed over the security and humanitarian situations in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States in Myanmar, which had resulted in displacement and irregular migratory movements in the region. At the same time, there was hope that political developments in the country would allow for refugee returns. UNHCR's work on the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees, solutions for the remaining refugees in Nepal, and durable solutions for the remaining IDPs in Sri Lanka were also welcomed.

20. Concerned about shrinking asylum space in the region, delegations called on States to uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* and on UNHCR to spare no efforts in ensuring universal compliance with this norm. Worrying trends included lack of access to registration, lengthy registration and RSD processes, and inconsistent access to RSD. Member States emphasized the need for a protection-sensitive approach in managing irregular migration and trafficking, including within regional mechanisms. The importance of enhanced regional cooperation was also stressed, including the need to: address the root causes of movements in countries and areas of origin; ensure protection in transit and destination countries; and explore durable solutions on a burden-sharing basis. UNHCR was encouraged to ensure outreach to populations in urban areas, including through the use of cash-transfers, with particular attention to the needs of women and girls. The Office was requested to provide more information on the achievements and challenges in reaching people of concern in urban settings and share best practices throughout the region. UNHCR's activities to end statelessness and ensure the rights of stateless populations in the region were welcomed, and there were calls on governments to remove gender discrimination in their nationality laws.

21. In response, the Director stressed that, while working to improve the conditions in countries of origin, continued support to host countries and communities in the region was vital until voluntary repatriation was possible. On Afghanistan, she agreed that the Government must be in the lead and that there was new impetus to take the process forward. UNHCR would work with the three governments in the region on how to proceed with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, using the high-level segment to build momentum. On Myanmar, she assured the Committee that UNHCR remained committed to working within the inter-agency framework to assist IDPs as well as stateless persons. In response to the comments on reaching urban populations, the Director noted that regional consultations would be held with staff and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to look at best practices, with a view to strengthening responses to these populations.

(d) Middle East and North Africa

22. The Director of the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa and Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Iraq/Syria Situations described the dire humanitarian needs in the region and worsening security situation in and around the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. He stressed the need for greater financial aid and international solidarity to help ease the burden on refugee hosting States, noting that no country could absorb the consequences of this crisis without severe economic and social impact on their markets, infrastructures and communities. An update was provided on UNHCR's operations in Yemen and Libya, where there were growing humanitarian challenges. The Director also highlighted the need to address the situation in the Mediterranean through comprehensive regional approaches, and stressed that protection, including access to asylum and respect for the principle of *non-refoulement*, remained foremost among UNHCR's priorities.

23. The discussion mainly focused on the Syria situation. The Committee paid tribute to humanitarian workers operating in an extremely dangerous environment. UNHCR was commended for its continued efforts to address the crisis, particularly its work across borders and front lines to reach populations in need, strong field presence, use of innovative technologies for registration and cash-based assistance, and winterization programme. Key concerns raised included humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic, the increase in SGBV, and the security of humanitarian personnel. UNHCR was encouraged to reinforce its protection work, particularly on behalf of children, and to prioritize SGBV prevention and response for displaced women and girls. One delegation suggested that a comprehensive regional protection strategy be developed for both IDPs and refugees, taking into account shrinking asylum space in some countries.

24. UNHCR was urged to ensure that all refugees in the region receive access to equivalent services and to work with partners to extend protection and assistance to refugees in urban areas. Other populations of concern, including Somalis, Sudanese and Afghans, were present in the region and the assistance and protection they receive should be commensurate with that of the Syrian refugees. Host States were commended for their extraordinary generosity. International solidarity and burden-sharing needed to be fully realized as host countries had reached the stage of "exhaustion" and exceeded their limits in providing assistance to the refugees. Hope was expressed that the upcoming donor conference in Kuwait would help address the growing needs.

25. There was broad support for the shift in approach with respect to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and efforts to increase development assistance, which was critical to bolstering the resilience of the host countries to withstand this unprecedented crisis. Several Member States recalled their commitment to resettling Syrian refugees, in response to UNHCR's call to secure 100,000 places in 2015-2016. However, several delegations cautioned that the number of places would need to be substantially higher in order to ease pressure on host countries. States were called upon to expand their annual resettlement quotas and to consider other creative avenues beyond resettlement.

26. On Iraq, there were calls for unimpeded humanitarian access. UNHCR was urged to ensure that assistance reaches populations in urban areas and outside of the Kurdistan region, including around Baghdad and in the south of the country. There was also a call for a single coordination structure aimed at aligning and synchronizing the Iraq component of the Syria 3RP for refugees and the strategic response plan for IDPs in Iraq. On Yemen, UNHCR was encouraged to remain engaged and prepared to respond to new humanitarian needs as they arise. Regarding mixed migration, it was essential to build a stronger dialogue between countries of origin, transit and final reception, and to put in place more protection safeguards. Concern was also expressed over the rise in smuggling and trafficking.

27. The continuation of the confidence building measures programme and the family visits for the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf was welcomed. One delegation emphasized the need for sustainable solutions for the refugees within the framework of the UN peace plan and appealed for adequate levels of assistance. Another delegation insisted on the fundamental need for the registration of the population and appealed for maintaining the humanitarian character of the programme.

28. The Director expressed appreciation for the positive words and many suggestions put forward, which provided staff with the courage and motivation to do more. In relation to the recommendations contained in the independent evaluation of UNHCR's response to the refugee influx in Jordan and Lebanon, the Director clarified that prioritization was not taking place in response to the current financial situation, but rather was an ongoing exercise. In the framework of the 3RP, UNHCR was planning for a scenario of continued conflict, with a need to ensure sustainability of action. The Director also reaffirmed UNHCR's commitment to remaining engaged in Yemen.

(e) Europe

29. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe described key concerns related to international refugee protection around the themes of access to protection, quality of protection and solutions. With unprecedented numbers seeking protection in Europe, some countries had resorted to stricter border controls, sometimes resulting in push-backs, the extensive use of detention, a failure to register arrivals, or no access at all. In view of the high number of arrivals, rescues and deaths at sea last year, UNHCR has tabled a comprehensive proposal, the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative, covering needs ranging from a predictable search and rescue operation to disembarkation, reception, profiling and

access to protection and solutions. This would necessitate greater responsibility and solidarity among European States, as well as increased availability of legal avenues for those in need of international protection, such as humanitarian visa programmes, extended family reunification, private sponsorship and study and labor migration schemes.

30. On the quality of protection, the Director noted that the Common European Asylum System contributed to improved legal and normative frameworks, but divergent application among States led to significant disparities in practice, as evidenced by a comparison of recognition rates, both overall and by nationality. These discrepancies result in an unequal distribution of refugees and asylum-seekers, such that two countries received nearly half of all asylum applications filed in the European Union in 2014. Meanwhile Turkey, hosting more than 1.6 million persons of concern, had adopted new asylum legislation and put in place a temporary protection regime for Syrians. The Director regretted the lack of progress in several protracted refugee and IDP situations and urged greater support for integration, while welcoming progress made by Estonia and Latvia to end the perpetuation of statelessness. Lastly, the Director highlighted the enormous challenges with regard to the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and thanked countries for their support and for hosting displaced persons from Ukraine.

31. Delegations expressed support for the Common European Asylum System while recognizing the need to ensure its full and effective implementation. Many shared concerns about the increasing numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers arriving across the Mediterranean; several reiterated the call for a comprehensive strategy, which would include robust search and rescue capacities as well as the provision of legal alternatives and new avenues for admissions, among other things. Many voiced their support for countries of transit and first asylum in improving their migration and border management, as well as their asylum and reception systems.

32. Delegations recognized the significant generosity of neighboring host countries and confirmed that they would continue to support the humanitarian response to the Syria situation, including through resettlement and other forms of admission for people in need of international protection. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine also received attention, with the opening of the UN Office in Donetsk seen as an important means of reaching affected populations. Echoing the Director's remarks, Members urged all parties to abide by international humanitarian law governing humanitarian access and protection of civilians. Delegations appreciated UNHCR's advocacy for the establishment of appropriate legislative frameworks.

33. While delegations acknowledged UNHCR's effort to support the implementation of the Sarajevo Process and its Regional Housing Programme (RHP), some noted that thousands of vulnerable refugees remain in need of solutions. Agreeing that progress had been slow, the Director referred to the recent budgetary increase for the RHP for people willing to return to Croatia and recognized that additional progress, including on social security, will be important for sustainability.

34. In response to other questions, the Director appreciated the reassurance that naval assets operated under the Frontex-coordinated Operation Triton are also used in rescue at sea activities even if it is primarily a border protection operation. He highlighted the need to combat smuggling and trafficking and the value of regional cooperation through mechanisms such as the Khartoum process, while underscoring that these efforts must be complemented by credible legal alternatives to dangerous irregular movements. In relation to the Ukraine situation, he thanked delegations for the support provided in 2014 and encouraged donor countries to coordinate bilateral assistance to address the needs of the most vulnerable, to avoid duplication, to procure locally where possible, and to deliver assistance in ways that enable self-sufficiency rather than dependency and protractedness. The Director also called for the IDP legislation to be implemented throughout the country.

B. Emergency preparedness and response

35. The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply presented the report contained in EC/66/SC/CRP.3, emphasizing the importance of placing persons of concern at the centre of UNHCR's emergency response: achieving "protection by presence" through strong field capacity and delivery; ensuring preparedness; and employing a "stay and deliver" approach to ensure critical protection and assistance needs are met in high security situations. She also briefed the Committee on UNHCR's newly revised policy on emergency response activation, leadership and accountabilities, which was being implemented in the context of the Nigeria situation and Ukraine.

36. The Committee commended UNHCR for its efforts to strengthen preparedness and response capacities and in particular for its "beneficiary-centred" approach. Support was expressed for humanitarian workers operating in difficult environments with high security risks. UNHCR was encouraged to implement the *Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations* (Joint Note). Delegations welcomed the creation of multifunctional emergency teams on permanent standby and requested further information about their composition.

37. Responding to a question about implementation of the revised policy on emergency response activation, leadership and accountabilities, the Director undertook to keep the Committee informed of progress made. She welcomed the feedback on contingency planning and acknowledged that this had been a gap that UNHCR was working to address. With respect to the composition of emergency standby teams, the Director noted that senior level D-1 and P-5 staff would be made available to coordinate and travel to the deep field as required. Staff on the teams would be experienced, with a good understanding of coordination and partnerships, as well as a strong protection profile.

C. Global programmes

38. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management introduced the paper on global programmes (EC/66/SC/CRP.7), highlighting key developments, achievements and challenges of the past year and reporting on a broad range of operational activities. He emphasized that support for emergency response activities was an overriding priority, including ensuring the availability of technical specialists for rapid deployment to serve as first responders and guide coordination and implementation in critical life-saving areas.

39. Delegations expressed support for the progress made on implementation of the five-year global strategies. They welcomed the practical, cost-effective and innovative approaches in UNHCR's programming, such as the health information portal *Twine*; enhanced data and information management; the biometric-based registration system; cash-based interventions; UNHCR's Exchange platform, which provides refugees with access to learning opportunities; and other initiatives in the areas of shelter and settlement, and fuel and energy. With respect to cash interventions, delegations stressed the importance of having a monitoring and oversight framework. While there was support for UNHCR's policy on alternatives to camps, a number of delegations emphasized the need to consult host countries prior to developing such policies, particularly in relation to the need to measure and assess their impact upon host communities. Moreover, the alternatives to camps policy should not be considered a substitute for durable solutions, including voluntary return, and the willingness of refugees should be taken into consideration. States welcomed efforts to mainstream refugees into national education and health care systems. In the area of public health, UNHCR's response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was commended. States also conveyed their appreciation for UNHCR's education strategy, including its expansion to 25 priority countries.

40. The Director expressed appreciation for the encouraging interventions on UNHCR's global programmes and implementation of the five-year strategies, yet underlined that many challenges remained, such as the large number of children out of school in contexts such as the Syria crisis. With respect to alternatives to camps, he welcomed the opportunity for a deeper exchange with States on the new policy. He underlined that refugees' economic participation in host communities was positive, and that building the capacity and skills of refugees was valuable regardless of the eventual solution they achieved or the length of their displacement. Cash-based interventions served additional purposes in promoting dignity and enabling refugees to prioritize assistance themselves. He noted that evaluations revealed that cash alternatives pose similar issues as in-kind assistance in terms of diversion of resources, and indicated that the Office continues to strengthen assessment, targeting and monitoring of such interventions.

IV. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

A. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for previous years

41. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management reported on UNHCR's follow-up to the Board of Auditors' recommendations on the financial statements for 2013 and previous years, as contained in EC/66/SC/CRP.4. She noted that the Board of Auditors had focused its 2013 review on the efficiency of UNHCR's administration and management of operations, including response to the Syria situation; the provision of health services; implementing partner management; inventory management; and financial matters. Addressing the Board's recommendations was a management priority for UNHCR, and the Office would continue improving procedures, systems and controls in order to mitigate the risks identified by the Board.

42. The Committee conveyed appreciation for the concrete steps taken by the organization to address the recommendations and for the informational matrices provided, which supported both transparency and organizational accountability. Regarding the recommendations related to UNHCR's operations, delegations welcomed the evaluation of the Syria operation and the biometrics registration system in Jordan, the improvements made to the fast-track procedures for emergency staffing, and the studies on cash-based interventions. Regarding the latter, UNHCR was asked to share with the Committee the results of the studies being undertaken. One delegation also highlighted the importance of multi-year funding, which was particularly useful in addressing protracted situations, and requested that donors who do provide such funding be able to see the benefits it brings. UNHCR's work on fraud prevention was appreciated, and the Office was asked to consider presenting a written update to the Standing Committee on actions taken.

43. In response to a comment about the Board's perceived lack of progress in the area of enterprise risk management (ERM), the Deputy High Commissioner highlighted the work that had been done thus far, including the issuance of an ERM policy and implementation procedures, the establishment of a Corporate Risk Register, the hiring of a Chief Risk Officer, and the assignment of responsibilities at the organizational level. While acknowledging that there had been a slow start, he assured the Committee that UNHCR was now well advanced.

44. With respect to the decision not to bring the internal audit function in-house, the Controller recalled that the United Nations financial regulations specified that internal audit should be conducted by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

The Deputy High Commissioner assured the Committee that the signing of a revised memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and OIOS had strengthened the relationship. While in the long-run it could be beneficial to the organization to bring internal audit in-house, UNHCR was satisfied with the arrangements recently agreed and the quality of services currently being rendered.

B. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

45. The Inspector General briefed the Committee on significant developments related to his Office since he reported to the Executive Committee in October 2014. Development of the 2015 inspection plan had benefitted from consultation among the Inspector General's Office (IGO), OIOS, UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service and UNHCR's senior management, and was grounded in a stringent risk-based approach. Building upon the revised memorandum of understanding reached between UNHCR and OIOS on the provision of internal audit services, several inspection missions would be jointly undertaken with OIOS, as well as with the World Food Programme. Moreover, some would include a pre-audit component. To facilitate post-inspection follow-up, the IGO had recommended the development of a corporate, online follow-up mechanism that would include the recommendations of all oversight functions within UNHCR. In the area of investigations, the IGO had developed an information-sharing protocol to facilitate communication with the Regional Bureaux and Representatives about ongoing investigations. The Office was currently developing a comprehensive vendor fraud policy, in response to recommendations from the Board of Auditors.

46. Delegations welcomed the Inspector General's continued efforts to strengthen his Office, including the approval of new positions and the close collaboration with other entities in the areas of risk-based assessment and management of oversight activities. The proposal to establish a comprehensive corporate follow-up mechanism was commended. In response to a question about the increase in complaints – including a 33 per cent increase in the number received in the year-to-date, as compared with the same period in 2014 – he suggested that this may be due to not only the expansion of UNHCR's global activities, but also the growing awareness and accessibility of the complaints mechanism. On the further strengthening and professionalization of his Office, the Inspector General expanded on efforts to implement the recommendations of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). Of the increased capacity recommended in terms of posts, 50 per cent had been requested and approved for 2015. Additional resources would be requested in 2016, should the financial resources be available.

V. Coordination and strategic partnerships

47. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented the paper on coordination and strategic partnerships contained in EC/66/SC/CRP.5, updating the Committee on implementation of UNHCR's refugee coordination model and the Joint Note. He also reviewed initiatives undertaken to strengthen partnerships with NGOs and in the context of durable solutions and statelessness.

48. The Committee considered the refugee coordination model and the Joint Note to be welcome developments for clarifying roles and responsibilities, avoiding gaps and strengthening operational delivery. Clear leadership was particularly important in crisis situations, and it was critical to maximize efficiencies given the growing gap between needs and resources. However, delegations cautioned that there needed to be flexibility in implementation, and that in mixed situations the provision of assistance should be driven by needs and not solely by the status of populations. It was also important to keep in mind the

distinct nature of the protection needs of refugees. Concern was expressed over the slow pace of the roll-out and implementation of the new modalities at the operational level. Despite good intentions, there were still unpredictable and disjointed practices in the field. It was important to build understanding of the different modalities among operational partners and to clarify the triggers for their deployment.

49. UNHCR was requested to regularly update the Committee on the roll-out of the refugee coordination model, including lessons learned. There was support for the increasing use of regional refugee coordinators and the resumption of joint missions to the field. Several delegations expressed an interest in receiving more information on the joint missions, including forewarning, briefings on the findings, and updates on operational implementation of the lessons learned. Delegations were pleased with UNHCR's support for the Transformative Agenda and continued efforts to inform the inter-agency discussions with its strong field presence.

50. In terms of cluster responsibilities in situations of internal displacement, UNHCR was urged to strengthen its leadership of the protection cluster and to ensure that protection was prioritized and properly addressed across all clusters. Delegations looked forward to receiving the independent whole-of-system review of protection in humanitarian crises by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and to seeing what concrete actions would be proposed to ensure that protection outcomes were achieved more effectively and consistently. There was a need to strengthen co-leadership arrangements, including through establishing a common understanding of the meaning of "co-leadership." UNHCR was urged to ensure it had an adequate number of staff who were fully trained to be cluster coordinators. Regarding partnerships, delegations expressed concern that there appeared to be little awareness in the field about the High Commissioner's structured dialogue with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and NGOs. UNHCR was encouraged to fully implement at all levels the agreed principles of partnership. In terms of the current financial situation, UNHCR was urged to be transparent with NGOs and discuss with them as soon as possible any changes that could affect them, particularly potential cuts to project budgets and staff.

51. UNHCR's engagement in the preparations of the World Humanitarian Summit were highly valued, and there was support for the issues it had raised, including the centrality of protection, maintaining a focus on affected populations, and calling for better alignment of humanitarian and development assistance. There was support for UNHCR's efforts to put displacement on the development agenda and emphasis on the importance of partnership with development actors in order to assist and stabilize host communities and lay the groundwork for durable solutions. However, UNHCR could not be the only advocate for development assistance, and bilateral and multilateral development actors, in cooperation with host countries, needed to take more responsibility. The principle of international burden and responsibility sharing was also stressed, particularly for developing host countries with meagre resources. In terms of partnerships for solutions and the various initiatives being undertaken, UNHCR and partners should fully involve host countries, taking into account their national priorities.

52. The Director expressed appreciation for the support and advice of delegations. He assured the Committee that UNHCR saw the new coordination modalities as pivotal for greater effectiveness in the delivery of aid and that the Office was fully committed to their implementation in collaboration with partners. He concurred that agreements at the global level were of little use if not implemented at the local level. In this regard, the joint missions had been helpful in clarifying and addressing potential misunderstandings and finding practical solutions. Responding to a question about the criteria for choosing which coordination system to apply, the Director clarified that the decision was based on the recommendation of the field and depended upon both the response capacity of the actors

present and the various affected populations. He fully acknowledged the need to work closely with host governments and communities. In this regard, he welcomed Turkey's readiness to co-chair the Solutions Alliance. As a major host country, Turkey could speak with authority on these issues. In terms of partnerships, the Director took note of the lack of awareness of the structured dialogue in the field but believed that collaboration with NGOs was strong and that the new partnership framework was of added value in this regard.

VI. International protection

A. Oral update on follow-up to the High Commissioner's Dialogues on Protection Challenges (2012-2014)

53. The Deputy Director (Policy and Law) of the Division of International Protection presented an update on the three preceding High Commissioner's Dialogues on Protection Challenges on the themes of protection at sea; protecting the internally displaced; and faith and protection. She noted that robust follow-up activities had helped change perceptions of the issues examined, galvanized the support of a wider constituency of partners, and amplified advocacy. She emphasized the importance of the strong engagement of NGOs, which had generated a better understanding of the themes and goals of each Dialogue and supported follow-up.

54. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the High Commissioner's Dialogues, noting their importance and relevance in an increasingly complex environment. They were considered unique forums for substantive and open discussion, precisely because they were not meant to arrive at a negotiated outcome. Reporting on follow-up to the Dialogues further reinforced their relevance. With respect to the 2014 Dialogue, States commended UNHCR for choosing the theme of protection at sea, noting its timeliness and welcoming the proposed next steps, including reinforcement of cooperation with a broad range of partners. Delegations also expressed support for the follow-up actions taken by UNHCR on both the faith and protection and the IDP Dialogues, including reinforced internal positioning.

55. The Deputy Director thanked delegations for their active engagement in the Dialogues and their supportive comments. Responding to a question about the relevance of the UN Secretary-General's "Rights up Front" initiative to IDP situations, she said UNHCR saw this as an important protection tool in ensuring human rights and preventing violations. The Office was engaged in protection in most crisis situations, including as global protection cluster lead, and was supporting the initiative through the provision of protection analysis. In relation to the Dialogue on protection at sea, she concurred with the need for improved data collection and a better understanding of the drivers of sea movements, noting that data collection and analysis on Mediterranean crossings was an important component of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative. She also indicated that UNHCR was exploring the possibility of replicating the model of the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, based in Nairobi, in other regions.

B. Oral update on the ExCom conclusion

56. Noting that conclusions on international protection provided an important source of guidance on protection and solutions since first adopted in 1975, and recalling the support voiced at the sixty-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee for resuming the conclusions process, the Rapporteur briefed delegations on the Bureau's reflections on the

way forward. Since last year's process, Member States had expressed a desire for greater predictability in the selection of themes, as well as for appropriate and sufficient groundwork leading up to the process of preparation and negotiation.

57. With these concerns in mind, and drawing from past experience, the Rapporteur proposed that the Committee consult on potential themes for a multi-year work plan. This would enhance clarity and predictability, while the longer lead-time would enable the Bureau to reinforce the preparatory process through the annual programme of work and the convening of expert briefings and consultations with partners. The documentation for the June meeting, which focuses on protection, could provide a source for the identification of themes; therefore, the Bureau had requested that UNHCR highlight more explicitly those areas where guidance in the form of conclusions might be warranted. The Bureau would also work closely with the new Assistant High Commissioner in relation to the protection vision for the years to come, particularly how conclusions could provide guidance in support of UNHCR's work. Finally, the Bureau was considering how its members could lend additional support to the Rapporteur's leadership of the process.

58. Member States welcomed the proposal and the constructive engagement of the Bureau. Several delegations and NGO observers commended the intent to strengthen linkages among the conclusions, the Committee's regular documentation, and other processes or events. Indicating a need to consult further on the idea of a work plan, one delegation felt that the Committee should, nevertheless, proceed with the negotiation of a conclusion this year, while another noted the need for flexibility given the fast-changing nature of the humanitarian world. The Rapporteur of the sixty-fifth session recalled the importance of principles that had guided the process last year, specifically: (1) the humanitarian focus; (2) the operational value of topics in addressing a void in the field, particularly in relation to the global strategic priorities; and (3) the consensual nature of the negotiations, including the principles of inclusivity, transparency and a balance between protection and solutions.

59. Expressing appreciation for these remarks, the Rapporteur indicated that he would reflect upon them in close cooperation with the Bureau and UNHCR, and would consider additional views and comments. The Senior Legal Coordinator in UNHCR's Division of International Protection welcomed the approach put forward by the Rapporteur and reiterated that the conclusions were deeply important to the Office as a source of the Committee's collective guidance on protection and solutions.

VII. Programme budgets and funding

60. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) jointly presented the *Update on budgets and funding for 2014 and 2015* (EC/66/SC/CRP.6). The Controller reviewed the financial situation in 2014 and provided an update on the 2015 budget approved by the Executive Committee in October 2014, noting that six supplementary budgets had since been established. The Director of DER indicated that, despite the high level of funding, the gap between the 2014 budget and the contributions received amounted to some US$ 3 billion. He cited examples of the impact in various operations and highlighted the significant shortfall projected for 2015, in part due to major currency fluctuations.

61. The Committee recognized that 2014 was an unprecedented year for UNHCR, with simultaneous responses required to multiple large-scale crises. Delegations shared UNHCR's concern regarding the effect of recent currency fluctuations and appreciated efforts to minimize the impact on persons of concern. The importance of expanding

UNHCR's donor base was emphasized. UNHCR was congratulated for its progress in increasing private sector funding and was encouraged to further explore this source of revenue. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's transparency in providing information on increases and decreases to the budget, as well as the Office's continued efforts to enhance budget planning and management mechanisms generally. UNHCR was urged to maintain its transparency as it proceeded with prioritization to manage the shortfall. The fact that UNHCR had seen a doubling of its expenditures between 2010 and 2014 was acknowledged, and delegations requested further information on the steps UNHCR was taking to ensure adequate oversight.

62. In response, the Controller noted that UNHCR had taken steps to ensure adequate oversight and internal controls commensurate with the growth of the organization, including increased staffing of oversight entities. In response to questions about the operational reserve, she clarified that it was used for activities for which there was no provision in the budget approved by the Executive Committee (e.g., response to the Ebola outbreak). There was currently only one donor contributing to the operational reserve. The Director of DER confirmed that UNHCR would make all efforts to be transparent with the Committee as it undertook prioritization, and that it was committed to further diversifying donor funding and pursuing innovative ways to deliver humanitarian assistance. Responding to a question about additional supplementary budgets presently foreseen, the Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilisation Service said UNHCR expected additional needs for the Nigeria situation.

63. The draft decision on funding and budgets for 2014 and 2015 was adopted (Annex).

VIII. Any other business

64. The Committee agreed that in 2015 it would continue the practice of reviewing and adopting reports by electronic circulation. The draft report of the sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee would be circulated by 27 March 2015. Two weeks would be allowed for the Committee's review. Absent amendment, the report would be deemed adopted on 10 April 2015.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2014 and 2015

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decisions on administrative, financial and programme matters at its sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions, (A/AC.96/1132, para. 15 and A/AC.96/1143, para. 13 respectively) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the sixty-first meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2014,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

1. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fourth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 biennial programme budget, amounting to $5,307.8 million and $5,179.5 million for 2014 and 2015 respectively;

2. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fifth session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 biennial programme budget (revised), amounting to $6,236.2 million and $6,234.4 million for 2014 and 2015 respectively;

3. *Notes* that the 2014 supplementary budgets amounted to $1,261.9 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

4. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's 2014 annual budget to a final total of $6,569.7 million;

5. *Notes* that the 2015 supplementary budgets currently amount to $750.4 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

6. *Notes* the reduction of $158.4 million in the Middle East and North Africa region for 2015;

7. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's 2015 annual budget to a current total of $6,826.4 million;

8. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2015 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and

9. *Urges* Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2015 annual budget.